

feel a little lonely. day always wanted to be with Eric and never with her any more. The boys worked together all day, and in the evenings went down to the river for a swim, or to the bridge to fish. When Garnet wanted to go along Jay was apt to discourage her by saying, "You'd better not come. Eric and I have to talk."

She played often with Citronella nowadays. Eric helped them to build a house in the branches of a big oak tree in the pasture. He made a little ladder for them to climb up to the first branch which was about six feet from the ground. Halfway up the tree they built a sort of platform with a railing, and on the spreading boughs above laid laths and dead branches for a roof. It was just big enough for the two girls, and often they spent hours there, the wind swaying them a little and the starlings chattering and whistling in the leaves above. It was great fun while it was new, but by the time they had finished it, and hauled up an old chair at the risk of breaking their welts, and eaten their lunch there every day for a week, the newness had worn off.

One grey afternoon in early August they were sitting there, and Garnet searching in her mind for something new to do, said, "Let's tell stories. You tell the first one, Citronella, because I thought of it."

It had been one of those dull, dull days when nothing interesting happens and everything goes wrong. It was the kind of day that you stub your toe a lot and lose things, and forget what it was that your mother asked you to get at the store. Garnet kept swallowing great, hollow yawns and wishing that something would happen: an earthquake, or an escaped hyena from a circus. Anything!

"Come on, Citronella, tell a story," she commanded, and lay down on the floor with her legs propped comfortably against the tree trunk.

Citronella sighed and began. "Well," she said, "once upon a time there was a beautiful young Lady sixteen years old. Her name was Mabel and she was very rich. She was so rich that she had a cellar full of gold pieces. She lived all alone in a big brick house on the top of a hill; at least she had a hired girl and a hired man but she didn't have any folks, I mean."

"Where were they" asked Garnet.

"Dead," replied Citronella. "Well, and besides the gold pieces, she had hundreds of necklaces and bracelets made of emeralds and diamonds and sapphires, and she wore white satin dresses for every day. And she had a Little automobile just big enough for her and nobody else. And she had a dog that could talk."

"Go on! " jeered Garnet. "I never heard of a dog that could talk."

"This one could. It was a French poodle and it talked French."

"What's a French poodle?" inquired Garnet suspiciously.

"Oh, a kind of a dog from France," answered Citronella with a vague wave of her hand. "Quit interrupting or I can't go on. Well, and Mabel had a swimming pool, too, and a little gold piano, and guess what else she had! She had a room with a soda fountain in it. It had all different kinds of faucets on it: a strawberry faucet, and a vanilla one, and chocolate and pineapple and maple. It makes me hungry to tell about it."

"Me too," agreed Garnet. "Well go on, what happened to her?"

"One day she went out riding in her little automobile. She drove and drove for a long time on a deserted road with trees on either side. It was beginning to get dark and she was just going to turn around and start home when she saw a poor old ragged man beside the road. He

looked very sad and awful tired and there were burrs in his beard. She stopped the car and said, 'Old man, what's the matter?' And he said, 'I've come a long way and I'm hungry. I want something to eat.' So Mabel said, 'Well jump in my car and I'll take you to my house,' and he did."

"But you said the car was just big enough for one," objected Garnet.

"Well, all right, he rode on the running board then. And when they got to her house she took him to the soda fountain and made him a maple-nut sundae, and a chocolate fudge sundae, and a strawberry ice-cream soda. He felt much better after that and he said, 'Look at me, Mabel.' And she looked at him, and suddenly he changed into a real handsome young man. 'Gee!' Mabel said. And he told her he was a rich prince and a witch had changed him into an old man and said he'd have to stay like that till someone did him a good deed. So then he asked Mabel to marry him and she said she would, and they lived happy ever after."

"And then what?" asked Garnet.

"That's all, " said Citronella, "they lived happy ever after."

Garnet sighed. "You always tell stories about people that are grown up and fall in love. I like stories about children and wild animals and explorers." She sat up suddenly. "I know what. Let's go to town to the library and read. It's still early and it's going to rain anyway."

Citronella objected for a minute or two because she said she didn't feel like walking all that way just to read a book. But Garnet was sure they could get a ride with someone and soon persuaded her to come.

As luck would have it the moment they went out of the gate they saw Mr. Freebody's truck clattering down the road towards them. They waved and called and Mr.

Freebody stopped and opened the door to let them in. He was going to town to buy feed.

"We'd rather ride outside, if you don't mind," said Garnet, and the two girls scrambled into the back of the truck and stood up holding onto the roof over the driver's seat.

It was fun to ride like that because as soon as he got on the highway Mr. Freebody drove very fast and the wind blew so hard against them that Garnet's pigtails stuck straight out behind, and Citronella's bang stood up on end like a hedge. They felt as though their noses were blown flat against their faces, and when they spoke their words flew away from them.

"I feel like a thing on the front of a boat," shouted Garnet. "A figurehead, I think it's called."

Citronella had never heard of figureheads and it was hard to explain because you had to yell so; the wind roared and Mr. Freebody's truck was a very loud one. Also if you opened your mouth too wide lazy beetles on the wing were apt to be swept into it.

They watched the truck swallow up the flat ribbon of road like a tape-measure; the little grey town of Blaiseville flew towards them. There it was, all just as usual: the courthouse with its tower and gilded dome, the gasoline station, and the red painted depot, and Mrs. Elson's yellow house with clothes leaping on the line; unusually big clothes they were as Mrs. Elson and her husband were both immensely fat. There was Opal Clyde, the doctor's daughter, bouncing a ball on the walk in front of her house, and there was Junior Gertz pulling his dog along in a little express wagon. Garnet and Citronella waved as they rode grandly by. Mr. Freebody drew up in front of the Farm Bureau; the truck coughed hoarsely once or twice and subsided into stillness. The girls jumped down.

"How you two little girls going to get home?" asked Mr. Freebody.

"Oh, we'll walk maybe," answered Garnet. "Or get a ride with someone," added Citronella hopefully.

They thanked him and walked up the Main Street past the blacksmith's and the drugstore and the post office. There was a bulletin in the post-office window that said: "Big Hollow Ladies Annual Picnic Next Sunday. Come One, Come Ah!" Garnet giggled at this notice, seeing in her mind a group of huge balloon-like creatures in dresses eating sandwiches under a tree. Of course she knew that the Big Hollow Ladies were simply ladies that lived in Big Hollow, but it had a funny sound all the same. They went on up the street past the store full of straw hats and overalls, and the shoe store, and the "Sweet Eat Shop" where the mechanical piano was making a noise like an old hurdy-gurdy in a boiler factory.

Finally on the outskirts of the town they came to the library, an old-fashioned frame building set back from the road among thick-foliaged maple trees.

Garnet loved the Library; it smelled deliciously of old books and was full of stories that she had never read. Miss Pentland, the librarian, was a nice Little fat lady who sat behind an enormous desk facing the door.

"Good afternoon, Citronella," she said, smiling.
"Good afternoon, Ruby."

Miss Pentland always called Garnet Ruby by mistake. There were so many little girls in Blaiseville with names like jewels that it was very confusing. There were Ruby Schwarz, Ruby Harvey, and Rubye Smalley, Pearl Orison and Pearl Schoenbecker, Beryl Schultz, and little opal Clyde.

Garnet and Citronella poked about among the books until each had found the one she wanted and then they

settled down on a broad- window seat between two tall cases of large old volumes that looked as if they hadn't been opened by anyone for fifty years.

Garnet had *The Jungle Book*, and Citronella with a sigh of pleasure began to read a wonderful story called *Duchess Olga*; or the *Sapphire Signet*.

Many times the screen door of the library creaked and closed with a muffled bang as people came and went; other children and grown people, old ladies looking for books on crocheting and boys wanting stories about G-men. For a while rain splintered against the window beside the two girls but they scarcely heard it. Garnet was thousands of miles away with Kotick, the white seal, swimming the wide seas to find a safe island for his people; and Citronella was in a ballroom lighted by a hundred chandeliers and crowded with beautiful ladies and gentlemen' in full evening dress.

Garnet finished "The White Seal" and went on to "Toomai of the Elephants." Once she looked up and stretched. "My, it's quiet," she whispered. "I wonder if it's late."

"Oh, we haven't been here long," said Citronella impatiently. She had reached the most exciting part of the book where Duchess Olga was being lowered on a rope down the face of a huge cliff. The trouble was that the man who held the rope didn't like Duchess Olga and was planning to let her drop at any minute. Citronella thought everything would turn out all right in the end but she wasn't sure.

By the time that Garnet had re-read " *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi*," and Duchess Olga had been rescued pages back and safely returned to the ballroom, the light began to fade.

"What does the word 'insidious' mean?" asked Citronella, but Garnet didn't know.

"My, it is kind of still here," she went on. "I'll ask

Miss Pentland what time it is." She disappeared behind the bookcases.

"Garnet!" she called loudly the next moment. "Miss Pentland's gone! Everyone's gone!"

Garnet leaped from the window seat. It was true; there was no one there. They ran to the door, but it was firmly locked. The back door was locked too; and the heavy glass windows had not been opened in years; they stuck in their frames as if set in cement. It was impossible to move them.

"Good night!" moaned Citronella. "We're locked in!" She was on the verge of tears.

Rut Garnet felt pleasantly excited.

"Citronella," she said solemnly, "this is an adventure. Things like this happen to people in books; we'll be able to tell our children and grandchildren about it. I hope we stay here all night!"

"Oh gee," sobbed Citronella. She wished with all her heart that she hadn't read *Duchess Olga*; it was too scary. She simply had no courage left. If only she had picked out a good peaceful book about boarding school girls or something, she wouldn't be so frightened now. Suddenly she had such a terrible thought that she stopped crying.

"Garnet!" she cried. "Do you know what day it is? Saturday! That means we'll be here till day after tomorrow. We'll starve!"

Garnet's excitement went flat. It would be awful to stay in here as long as that.

"Let's bang on the windows," she suggested. "Maybe someone will come."

They banged on the glass and shouted at the tops of their Lungs. But the library was some distance from the street, and the thick maples deadened the noise they made. Blaiseville people were peacefully eating their

suppers and never heard a sound.

Slowly the dusk sifted into the room. The bookcases looked tall and solemn, and the pictures on the wall were solemn too: steel engravings of Napoleon at Elba, and Washington Crossing the Delaware.

There was no telephone in the library and no electric light. There were gas fixtures but Garnet and Citronella could not find any matches. They rummaged through Miss Pentland's desk but it was full of useless things like filing cards, rubber stamps, elastic bands and neat little rolls of string.

Citronella pounced upon a chocolate bar in a pigeon-hole.

"We won't starve right away anyhow," she said, brightening a little. "I don't think Miss Pentland would mind if we ate it, do you?"

"We'll buy her another when we get out," said Garnet; so they divided it and stood, sadly munching, at the window nearest the street. The twilight deepened.

"*Who is that!*" cried Garnet suddenly. They saw a dim, small figure slowly approaching on the cement walk that led to the Library door. The person seemed to be bowing.

Citronella began thumping on the window joyously. "It's Opal Clyde, bouncing her ball," she said. "Yell, Garnet. Yell and bang."

They both yelled and banged; and Opal after a scared glance at the dark window scurried down the path as fast as she could go, without coming nearer to see what was making the noise.

"Do you think she'll tell someone?" asked Citronella anxiously.

"Oh, she thought it was a spook," said Garnet in disgust. "Probably no one will believe her if she does."

They watched hopefully. All over Blaiseville the street lamps blossomed suddenly with light, but only a faint gleam penetrated the maple leaves. The two girls heard cars coming and going and faint shouts of children playing in back yards. They pounded and called till they were hoarse and their knuckles ached. But nobody came.

After a while they gave it up as a bad job and returned to the window seat.

The room was very dark now; strange, unknown and filled with shadows. It was as though it wakened at nightfall; as though it breathed and wakened and began to wait. There were tiny creaking sounds and rustlings, and airy scamperings of mouse feet.

"I don't like it," whispered Citronella. "I don't like it all: My own voice scares me. I don't dare talk out loud."

"Neither do I," murmured Garnet. "I feel as if all those books were alive and listening."

"I wonder why our folks don't come after us," said Citronella.

"They don't know where we are, that's why!" answered Garnet. "They don't even know we came to town: and we didn't tell Mr. Freebody that we were going to the library."

"I wish I'd never learned to read," sighed Citronella. "I wish I was some kind of animal and didn't have to be educated."

"It might be fun to be a panther," agreed Garnet, "or a kangaroo, or a monkey."

"Or a pig, even," said Citronella. "A safe, happy pig asleep in its own pen with its own family!"

"One that had never seen a library and couldn't even spell pork," added Garnet, and giggled. Citronella giggled too, and they both felt much better.

Outside the night wind stirred among the trees, and a

maple scratched at the window glass with a thin finger; but inside it was close and still except for the small mysterious sounds that can be heard in all old houses after dark.

Garnet and Citronella huddled together and whispered. They heard the courthouse clock strike eight, then nine; but when it struck ten they were both sound asleep.

At a little before midnight they were wakened by a tremendous pounding and shouting.

"Who? What's that? Where am I?" shrieked Citronella in a panic, and Garnet, her heart thumping, said, "In the library, remember? Someone's at the door."

She ran forward in the dark, barking her shins and whacking her elbows on unfamiliar surfaces.

"Who's there?" she called.

"That you, Garnet? Thank the Lord we've found you at last," said a voice that was unmistakably Mr. Freebody's. "Is Citronella with you? Fine! Both your dads are scouring the town for you. Open the door!"

"But we're locked in, Mr. Freebody," called Garnet. "Miss Pentland has the key."

"I'll get it. I'll get it," shouted Mr. Freebody excitedly. "You wait there."

"We can't do anything but wait," said Citronella crossly. She was always cross when she first woke up.

In a little while they heard rapid footsteps on the front walk, and voices, and then the lovely sound of a key turning in the lock. Miss Pentland, with her hat on sideways, rushed in and embraced them.

"You poor little things!" she cried. "Such a thing has never happened before; I always make sure everyone's gone before I lock up. I can't understand how I missed you! "

"That's all right, Miss Pentland," said Garnet. "It was

an adventure. And we ate your chocolate!"

Garnet's father and Mr. Freebody and Mr. Hauser came in too, all talking and exclaiming.

"Are you both sure you're all right?" asked Mr. Hauser anxiously, his fat, kind face looking pale for the first time in years.

"We're all right, Papa, "said Citronella. "But we're awfully hungry."

"I'll go telephone the folks at home," volunteered Mr. Freebody. "So's they won't have to worry no longer. You better take the little girls down to the lunch wagon for a bite. Only place that's open at this hour."

The lunch wagon was down by the railroad tracks; neither Garnet nor Citronella had ever been there before. It was full of bright yellow light, and cigar smoke, and powerful food smells. It was wonderful to go there so late at night and eat fried egg sandwiches and apple pie and tell everybody what had happened to them.

"Yes sir!" said Mr. Freebody coming in the door. "Don't you be fooled! Those ain't two little girls you see settin' up there; those are two genuine bookworms, couldn't stop reading long enough to come home. Planning to take up permanent residence in the library from now on, ain'tcha?"

Everyone laughed.

"Just the same," whispered Garnet to Citronella. "I sort of wish they hadn't found us until morning. Then we could have told our grandchildren that once we stayed in the public library all night long!"

VII. Journey

THE LONG days of August were filled with activity. The barn took shape rapidly and it was going to be a fine one. Every now and then Mr. Freebody